

I am the proud grandson of two holocaust survivors, both carried the tattooed symbol of having been imprisoned in Auschwitz. They were the victims of the ultimate bullying and racism — they were degraded, humiliated, beaten, ostracized, and subjected to unfathomable horrors. I grew up in Fairfield, which is a fairly affluent town, and you would not expect vicious attacks or anti-Semitic slurs from those who profess to be so upscale. Bullying is pervasive, and I was the victim of those things, and more. Yet, for the past 20 plus years, I have heard about zero tolerance for bullying in the public schools, and absolutely nothing was done to combat that degrading and humiliating behavior from elementary school forward. I was a victim of bullying, but no educator was ever able to really help the situation. When I heard about this bill, it struck a chord with me. Holocaust and genocide education is about so much more than just what actually happened to people in those horrific times—it can be about showing young people what acts of kindness saved lives; about showing the effect of evil and hatred; about showing what happens when we ignore even the slightest taunting, bullying, or hatred, because that quickly spiraled out of control in Europe in the 1930's and 40's.

We cannot stop what is taught to people in their homes, their country clubs, or in the media, but, mandatory teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides, maybe will cause some people to have to stop and think about their actions. We so often forget about cause and effect in this really social media driven generation, because we are not forced to see what affect posting something or tweeting something can have because we are not there. But teaching about when really bad things happen to good people, can show the cause and affect, with very real experiences.

I was really blessed to have known my grandparents, who taught love and compassion and kindness. If they can teach that, after what they lived through, and we can have teachers can teach the lessons of Holocaust and Genocide, then maybe we have a fighting chance.

Being bullied has left its lasting effects on me, but that is not the relevant point here. I sincerely implore you to put this mandatory Holocaust education bill before the legislature. Do something to show the rest of the country that Connecticut will not tolerate hatred of any kind, in a time where it seems that that is just getting worse, and we are becoming numb to it. Just saying it, does nothing, as I learned the hard way. As I heard from my beloved grandfather rather often, actions speak louder than words. Educate your students, and by educating them, maybe educate their parents, and make this a better world for all of us.